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The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Revelation 6:1-8

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for the goodness and the gifts that you bring to us. Lord, I just thank you for what is in store and what we have been protected from by the gift that you've given to us. And Lord, we're going to be entering into some difficult material this morning and so I just pray for the Holy Spirit's presence, I pray for your Holy Spirit's power, I pray you would guide us as we walk through this; and again we just give thanks for the grace you've given us to be on your side in this battle. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well so far in our study of Revelation we have encountered Jesus's critique of the seven churches; that was in the first three chapters; and chapter 4 and 5 have been about another vision that takes John directly into heaven to observe this heavenly worship service, and the worship is directed at Jesus Christ at its center as this lamb standing having been slain. And the lamb is the only one that's deemed worthy to open the scroll that is held by God himself. And the scroll, it's sealed with seven seals and it

represents the secrets of life itself, the unfolding of God's plan to its final consummation. And John had been weeping, he's thinking that no one including the angels was worthy to open the seal and one of the elders tells him, *"Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."*

And we noted last time how jarring it was to see the lamb presented as the winner of this battle who was called the lion of the tribe of Judah and yet when all the attention is put on the conqueror, we see the image of Christ not as a lion but as a lamb, and not just any lamb but as a lamb slain. And the point of the image is that Christ represents the ultimate victory of life itself that was given to us through the death of Jesus. And as I put it last week Jesus shows us a completely different way to victory; that is Jesus wins by losing. This lamb is slain is the all-conquering King who conquers by being humbled even to death on a cross. At the announcement that the lamb is the only one worthy to break the seal and open the scroll, all of heaven erupts in worship. Well chapter 6 takes us from the scene of astounding worship back to earth to the horror of the breaking of the seals and the opening of the scroll. And believe me, from there things rapidly go from bad to worse.

Now some of you know I came upon this project quite reluctantly. Certain elders who will remain anonymous pressed me repeatedly for years to preach through Revelation. And I resisted feeling that there were much more compelling things that God wanted me to deal with. Well this time, Steve -- not Sumnick -- prevailed, and thus far, for me it's been -- actually it's been a wonderful experience, one that requires me to do extensive reading in many different commentaries.

So entering into this phase of breaking of the seals I came across this comment in one of the commentaries that summed up my feelings exactly. This is Darrell Johnson, and this is what he says. He says: "It is at this point--at 'the breaking of the seven seals'--that most people stop reading Revelation. It is at this point that most preachers stop preaching Revelation--and understandably so. Here the work of interpretation gets much more difficult. What do all the symbols and images mean? And here the work of living the interpretation gets much more difficult, not because the message is so complicated, but because it is so spiritually demanding." (Johnson, Darrell W.. Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation (p. 166). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.)

Well, I would add that not only does the material get much more

difficult but a great deal of the difficulty surrounds the fact that each symbol, each statement, each description, is surrounded by a myriad of sincere gifted and passionate commentators, many of whom disagree wildly about what's taking place. I mean it's one thing to have some nuance and understanding between different commentators, it's another thing entirely to see godly men take completely opposite tacks and have them all back up their positions with extensive scriptural references and then try to decide what's what. I mean I recognize my complete and utter inability at this point and I'm tempted greatly to just say, okay, we're done here. I promise I will just give you an array of understandings when that's appropriate and I will give you my best understanding when I think that's appropriate, but understand, I too am approaching this with a great deal of ignorance trying to come to grips with this incredibly difficult material. And so I plead with you, don't take my word as anything remotely final in any respect but simply as the attempts of another believer to make sense of this.

So having said that, let's take a look at the four horsemen of the apocalypse. This is *Revelation 6:1-8*. It says: *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.*

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!" When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Okay. Well, horse number one is obviously known as the white horse. Again, let me just read to you. It says: *Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.*

Now once again folks passionately believe that this represents

either Christ or the gospel itself or the antichrist or a host of other things. Understand also that these horses are also understood to be either historical creatures that describe the church from its very beginning or contemporaneous creatures that appear only at the end of time. Well I'm of the opinion that the appearance of the horsemen is contemporaneous and that it is accelerating, that is to say that they appear as instruments of judgment and their judgment grows increasingly over time.

And the white horse I believe is the antichrist. The folks who think that it represents Christ instead, they do so because the horse is white and he's wearing a crown and he's also riding out like a hero which in the previous two chapters of Revelation painted him as. However, he rides out directly at the command of one of those four angels that we spoke about last week. And one of those angels issues a direct order to the white horse, and he says, "Come!" Well Jesus is under no one's authority and he certainly answers to no one's command, let alone to the command of an angel. But another more powerful reason to suspect that this is not Jesus but rather an imitator, an antichrist set to unleash on the world a whole host of false christs is because of what Jesus said in his statements in *Matthew 24*. It says: *As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and*

of the end of the age?" So right then Jesus begins to explain how this end is going to unfold and it's amazing how Jesus' vision lines up with these four horsemen. Again he says: As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

So Jesus says the sign of his coming will be first marked by a flood of false christs. The white horse goes throughout the world holding a bow in his hand with a crown on his head and we're not told anything other than that, but with Jesus' comments it would seem like this -- that this is the false christ knowing that Jesus spoke of the beginning of the end as being a time of unprecedented false christs.

And that's not the only reference Jesus begin points to a proliferation of false christs in *Mark 13*. This is what he said. He said: *"For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. And then if anyone*

says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand."

Well Paul himself described the same kind of scourge the false teaching as it was plaguing the church in Corinth and there he took up the subject of false apostles and he pointed out how the enemy loves to work through them. This is what he said, he said: *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

See, Paul had been warning his people about listening to these false apostles but these incidences were few and far between simply because of the opportunities that were available back then. There was no TV, there was no radio, there was no Internet, there was no social media. There's no way to even begin to imagine the explosion of a media that has allowed false teachers access to every single aspect of our lives. You know, Paul decried the attitude of the Corinthians. He said: *But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led*

astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Well, that was two millennia ago. Today another Jesus, a Jesus with a different spirit from the one that we receive or a totally different gospel from the one we've accepted is broadcast literally day in, day out throughout all of social media. I mean there are now flat-out false christs through the cults such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and folks seem to readily accept that different gospel. I mean I was just visited a few weeks ago by Jehovah's Witnesses who were back going door-to-door selling literally a false christ, a christ who is not God. And two very polite people showed up at my door and I just said, "Are you Jehovah's Witnesses?" And they said, "Yes." I said, "Look, you don't believe that Jesus Christ is very God; I don't think we have anything to say to each other." And they just nodded, turned around and walked away. They knew they had no chance of presenting their gospel to somebody who already knew that they were proclaiming a false christ. But what about the thousands of homes where people don't know the first thing about who Jesus is?

Recently I've been listening to a series of debates between conservative evangelicals and people who are flat-out false teachers, and one thing that amazes me is how clever, how absolutely brilliant many of these false teachers are. How they can take scriptures that are clear, simple, declarative statements and twist them into pretzels such that when they're finished, they mean the exact opposite of what you think they would mean. And as I was listening to this, I was thinking if I was a new believer and I wandered into their church, I wouldn't have a chance. I mean I would have been instantly persuaded that these scriptures are taken out of context by conservatives and that they actually don't mean what they seem to mean. I could easily hear someone hearing these teachings and becoming completely persuaded, and that's exactly how false teaching works.

But understand, this type of false teaching is now everywhere. It includes a deconstruction movement where people not only renounce their Christian faith but established websites directed to helping other people -- quote -- "gain the courage to renounce their faith" as well. There's even a website that focuses on un-baptism ceremonies where people can repudiate the fact that at one time they were baptized into the Christian faith. Now they can announce to the world that they're formally repudiating that decision.

You know, things were bad in Paul's day regarding false teaching but Paul didn't have the communication resources that we have and along with it comes multiple ways of claiming false christs and false faith that never even existed as an opportunity before. The white horse of the false christ has no doubt been set loose in the world, and at this point it seems to be enjoying a great deal of success.

Next comes the opening of the second seal, the red horse. It says: *When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.*

Well, the red horse obviously represents not just war but the presence of conflict and an absence of peace. And again, we don't know if this reference point for this goes back to the fall because certainly that's where it started, I mean, Cain slew Abel in the very first act of war and it happened between the first two children of Adam and Eve, and ever since then there's been conflict and aggression between human beings. But if we go back to what Jesus was saying about the time at the end, we find him saying this. He says: *And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is*

not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. Jesus seems to indicate that there will be an increase in wars and rumors of war. I mean, certainly his time on earth was not without its conflict and lack of peace, so his statement of the end certainly seems to point to this type of activity going well past what was established as a norm.

I said last week, we live in a time of unprecedented conflict and that logic and reason don't seem to be operating any more. And that what happens over and over again in mankind's long history is that once reason no longer becomes an option, then power becomes the go-to response and that inevitably ends in some type of war, civil or otherwise. And so the red horse certainly seems to be running among us. And again, how do you evaluate peace being taken from the earth? I mean, do riots, does civil unrest and road rage qualify as war? And we all know that those have increased logarithmically. I mean, just this week we had teenage riots in Chicago and Compton, California.

And how about actual wars? You know, they've become so common that unless we're talking about a world war, we're not even aware of the local wars. I mean a quick survey of the wars just this past year that have killed over ten thousand people in combat

include civil wars in Myanmar, Ethiopia, Columbia, Afghanistan, and Nigeria. We don't even hear about those wars because we're fixed on the big war, the one between Russia and Ukraine. And we're fixed on it because it threatens to become a hot war between the United States and Russia or so it is rumored.

And what was it that Jesus said? *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars."* And Jesus also said that *"nation will rise against nation"* and you know the actual Greek term that's translated "nation" is one we're all familiar with is the word "ethnos." It's the word that we get "ethnic" from. And what Jesus is saying is that ethnic group will rise up against ethnic group. Does that sound familiar? I mean the ethnic strife from our country hasn't gotten better, it's gotten profoundly worse, and the problem is no one knows where this is headed. I mean, we may look back at this time and as bad as it seems say it's relatively good compared to what's going to unfold. Who knows?

What we do know as yet another seal remains to be broken. It says: *When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.* Well it seems like the red horse is always accompanied by a black horse. It says: *When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say,*

"Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

Well as we all know war brings with it as a close companion famine; because food supplies are destroyed, hunger becomes normative. A quart of wheat is enough to supply food for only one person for a day, but notice what it now costs. A denarius represents a full day's wage. It's saying you'll be spending all of your income simply trying to survive and that's just for one person. What about families? And the sad thing about the black horse is that it represents famine overwhelming the ones who it almost always affects and that's the poor and the marginalized. I mean, you need wheat to survive, you don't need oil and wine. Well they point to the simple fact that the wealthy and the powerful will somehow be able to escape the effects of this famine. And all we have to do is look around to see this taking place right here and right now.

I mean Daniel Akin in his commentary on Revelation points out that: "It is estimated that 805 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life. Over 3 million children a year die of malnutrition. One out of six children in the entire

world (roughly 100 million in developing countries) is underweight."

Well, you could argue that the black horse has been with us again ever since the fall, I mean, Jesus said, "*the poor you have with you always*" but again compare what's taking place with what Jesus said would take place in *Matthew 24*, and we find he says, "*There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.*"

See, our problem is we really have no frame of reference. You know, the number of earthquakes today may be a sign of the end or it may be actually blessedly low compared to what they might be in the future. The same goes with famine, I mean, the famine today is mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and the earthquakes are almost always someplace far, far away. I mean, the latest one just happened in Turkey and Syria; it took 58,000 lives. The one in Haiti in 2010 took 160,000. The one in Indonesia in 2004 took 228,000. But you know, earthquakes barely register with us because we have so little firsthand experience with it. Well to those people who are living in those areas, I guarantee it felt like the end of the world. And just because we haven't experienced that kind of catastrophe doesn't mean that we're immune. I mean geologists and seismologists are warning us over and over again about the potential of a massive earthquake on the west coast.

And what are these? What are these seals? These seals are judgments from God. The white horse is the false Christ; the red horse takes away peace; the black horse brings famine and of course that brings out the pale horse. And this is truly awful. What is called pale is actually a color in the Greek and the color is translated yellowish green. It's literally the color of death itself. It says: *When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.* Well, pale horse represents death and its constant companion Hades follows right after.

You know, it says a quarter of the earth will be taken by sword, by famine, by pestilence and by wild beasts. Well 25 percent of our world's population is almost two billion souls, and that number far outpaces even the awful numbers that we see today, so I think it's reasonable to conclude that that judgment is still in the future. In fact those numbers are so cataclysmic that instead of this being an ongoing problem since the dawn of time, there will be a time when the whole world acknowledges not just that bad things are happening but the bad things that are happening are happening as a direct result of the judgment of God.

That judgment comes with a fifth seal. It says: *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

Well the souls of all the martyrs who've died for the kingdom, they're under the altar, they're in the place where the blood of sacrifices used to flow. These are those who have sacrificed their lives. And what we have to understand here is that when we enter the kingdom of God, we're entering a kingdom that is literally at war, and wartime always involves casualties. And God's attitude towards these precious saints, it's loving and caring; at the same time it's highly disconcerting. I mean God tells them to be patient, God tells them to wait just a little while longer and then He goes on to say that there's even more saints that are going to die for the kingdom and they need to wait until the full number of those dying is complete before God acts.

It says: *Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.* Now would God welcome us into a kingdom

knowing that we were going to have to die for it? Isn't that exactly what he did? You know, it says: *Jesus being found in human form, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* And remember Jesus told us to count the cost and he made no bones about saying that the cost just might be your life.

It says: *Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."* Some folks have a hard time with this passage for a different reason. They see the souls who were slain, they see them as not having the same attitude as Christ on the cross or even Stephen when he was executed. Christ said: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;"* and Stephen said, *"Lord, do not hold their sin against them."* And the martyred souls, they say: *"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

Well, are the saints looking for vengeance or are they concerned that the justice of God is being impugned? Well, I would go for the latter. I mean after all, the saints open up their request by stating that God is all sovereign, all holy, and all true and their

place in heaven is what makes that a certainty. I mean, it seems much more reasonable to see them concerned not for vengeance but for God's reputation, and that's understandable. I mean ever since the cross God has withheld judgment to a point where so many feel free to laugh and to mock at even the thought of the wrath of God. But Paul has an answer for those people. He says: *Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

You see, the saints are concerned that God's kindness is going to be interpreted as weakness. For many that's precisely how it's viewed. But God is not mocked and he's infinitely patient. And you know, the statement also makes an interesting case for our brothers and sisters who have gone on before us having some kind of understanding of what's actually taking place down here on earth while they are up in heaven. And the question we often think about is do the saints in heaven have any inkling of what's taking place here on earth? Well, they surely must know that God hasn't avenged them yet and the only way they could ever know that is by having some understanding of the events that are taking place on earth itself. And we know that Hebrews says: *Therefore, since we are*

surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

And so the question is does this great cloud of witnesses just refer to the ancient saints spoken of in Hebrews 11 or does it also include those folks who we know who died in Christ? Well, John Piper suggests that those who are pleading with God to avenge their blood, that they actually have some access to what's going on on earth. This is what he says. He says: "I am inclined to think that it does mean they are watching, partly because of the picture of the race. It is as though the saints finish their marathon at their death. Then they come around and stand on the side of the racetrack and watch us. And we are supposed to take heart from that because, in essence, they would be saying, 'Hang in there. Trust God. You can do this. We made it; you can make it too.' And I find that very, very encouraging."

Well, the fact is at this point we need all the encouragement we can get because from this point things go from bad to worse again as the sixth seal is broken. It says: *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its*

winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Again, we have this remarkable correlation with what Jesus told his disciples at the end of his public ministry in three different places. In *Matthew 24* Jesus says: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." And then in *Mark 13*, he said: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." And then again a third time in *Luke 21*. He says: "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

And it's not just the New Testament. You look in the Old Testament and you find Old Testament prophets saying the exact same thing. I just picked one. This is *Isaiah 13*. He says: *Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the*

land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.

So clearly there's going to be some type of massive earthquake that has some huge effect sending up all kinds of debris which could explain the sun being darkened and the moon not giving its light. And the stars falling could be a reference to meteor showers but there also seems to be some type of thermonuclear reaction in the atmosphere. This is Peter in *1 Peter*. It says: *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

And god goes on to describe the day like no day since before the earth was even created, but even more stunning is the reaction of the world to these events. Listen to this. It says: *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for*

the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

You know, this is the ultimate answer to those who complain why doesn't God show himself? Why doesn't God do more miracles? You know, if he would only demonstrate his power and his sovereignty, then people would clearly respond. Well, I've got news. You don't get a greater display of the absolute, complete and total power of God than this. And the response of mankind is proof of the warning that Hebrews gives us. It says: *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness."* You see, every time you reject God's offer of peace and of life itself, your heart hardens and eventually you're going to reach the point of no return. That's just what our text this morning is describing. You see, the power and might of God is no longer deniable, it's no longer resistible but instead of turning, instead of repenting, these hearts of stone choose to be buried under mountains of stone rather than repent and see God's mercy. God's wrath is upon them but the die is cast, there's no going back. All that remains in the world is a desire to escape literally into mass suicide rather than face the wrath of the Lamb.

I don't know about you but this tends to make me a little less than optimistic about the future. I mean, do you see why I didn't want

to preach through this book? I mean there's so much that is awful in here. What possible good news is there to find in all of this carnage? Well we need to notice something about the carnage. There's something that stands out. And so we ask is God in charge here? The answer's absolutely. Is he responsible for all of this carnage? Well, in one sense yes, but another very important sense so is mankind. See, what is happening over and over again in every one of these sealed judgments is God removing his presence and allowing the inherent wickedness in all of us to blossom as it were.

The white horse described the propensity of human beings to twist and contort God's word and God's way into a false gospel; the red horse describes our propensity to forsake the peace of Christ and instead opt for war; the black horse describes our propensity to gather up our own resources to excess while the rest of the world starves; and the pale horse -- death itself -- describes the logical outcome of choosing to reject God and go our own way. As one author put it, deceit, destruction, deprivation and death always accompanies a rejection of God and the way of the Lamb.

See, the world faces the very same choice that Israel faced when Moses challenged them. This is what he said. He said: *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set*

before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live.

The world has clearly chosen instead of life and blessing, death and cursing. And what it points out is where all of life outside of the gospel is headed. It's been called the tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble or Daniel's seventieth week. It will be a time of indescribable horror, so much so that God himself gave up heaven itself in order to carve out our rescue. Just remember, God became flesh and lived among us perfectly so he could take that perfect life to the cross and offer it up as a sacrifice for your sin and my sin so that we by faith could stand before a holy God with no fear of these horsemen of the apocalypse because we know that by his own blood he has rescued us.

Next week we'll compare the absolute horror of what's in store for mankind in his rebellion with the blessings that God has in store for his sheep. Meanwhile, I would plead with you to consider the blessings that you have been granted and consider the responsibility that we all have to share the good news while there is still time. *Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* Let's pray.

Father, I hated giving this message. I don't like to give messages

that consist of bad news followed by more bad news followed by more bad news. But Lord, I thank you for the warning that you've given us. I thank you that you've turned the pages and given us a vision of the future so that we can be prepared right here for the present. I thank you that we have the ability right here, right now to make sure that we are right with you, to make sure that our salvation is real. And not only that but to double and triple our efforts to share this good news while there are still time -- while there is still time before there is no more. And I pray that before the hardening of hearts become so real that it's impossible to change that we would have not only opportunities but success granted by your Spirit. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.